

## **2012 State of the City Address**

### **Robert Miller, Mayor**

Good evening and welcome. I'd like to extend a special welcome to newly-elected City Aldermen Ruth Dawidziak in District 2 and Tom Preusker in District 4. Congratulations should also go to those City Aldermen who were re-elected to office, Ed Johnson and Tom Vos.

I said this before but it bears repeating. Over the next year many important issues will come before this Council for review and action. We must work closely together to serve the people of Burlington and their interests. This past year has been a difficult time for many families, businesses and organizations. We cannot lose sight of this reality. Yet, while there are challenges to face, our community has the durability, vitality, vision and resources to meet them along with the optimism and goodwill needed to build better lives and a better City.

Every day I am reminded that one of the City's greatest resources is our workforce. This administration has worked hard to make municipal operations more effective and efficient. We implemented new programs while maintaining a level work force over the last four years. This would not be possible without the commitment of department heads and all the employees of the City. I appreciate these efforts. As a community we can never take the hard work and dedication of City employees for granted.

Over the last year, we've made progress on several projects and issues that will provide lasting benefits for Burlington. We made important investments in the infrastructure of the City, while promoting a climate for economic development and growth.

These efforts are bound together by our common commitment to a vision of Burlington that supports individuals, families, businesses, organizations and local government in their efforts to work together and thrive. As a community we have the power to do this but success doesn't happen by accident.

Just recently the Council approved a plan, to improve a large portion of, and repair a large portion of the City's aging streets. These improvements will go a long way in upgrading the quality of city streets that have been classified as poor.

With the overall economy in the shape that it is, we are going to have to think outside the box again, like we had to do for the Hampton Inn, if we are going to attract new commercial and industrial entities to our city. We cannot afford to wait for new business to find us. We must become very active in searching out companies and help them find ways and reasons to locate in Burlington.

There are signs that the economy is improving. New retail stores have opened, Dunham Sports and Leisure Pool just to name a couple, and O'Reilly Auto parts will open this Fall. Retail sales through the city have increased, albeit slightly, also point to a slow improvement in the local economy.

On the commercial and industrial front, we saw the construction of a new headquarters for Canella Response Television, the expansion of Quad Graphics in the BMOP, and the recently announced expansion of Lynch Display Vans.

The City has opened talks with our partners, Racine Economic Development Corporation (RCEDC), with four new industries that have expressed a desire to locate here. Racine County no longer has any Class A industrial space available for new companies wishing to locate here. In order to address this problem we are working with RCEDC and development companies to build a Class A industrial space in our Burlington Manufacturing and Office Park (BMOP).

We are always looking for ways to consolidate services. We are now talking to our neighboring communities about the possibility of combining public works projects. The goal would be to combine street projects into one large package which would produce lower costs for the repairs. In addition, as new technology and machines are developed, we will be examining potential uses and the cost savings these new products may produce for the City.

We have recently combined services with Racine County. Some of the services that were provided at the Western Racine County Service Center are now handled by City Hall. In exchange the County is providing Human Resource services to City. The goal is to save money and to continue to provide services to the public.

Racine County has expressed a desire to close the Western Racine County Service Center. This building has out lived its usefulness and is in need of extensive and expensive repairs. City Hall is also showing its age and is in need of extensive and costly updates. The amount of money needed to remodel both of the buildings far exceeds the cost of building a new shared Government Center. We have opened discussions with the County about the construction of a government building in downtown Burlington. The new center would combine city government and county services into a "One Stop Shop". The goal is to have all government services available in one place.

The City is in sound financial shape. Our Budget for 2012 was set in December and provides for the funding of all City services. However, with the uncertainty of State government and what changes may occur, the 2013 Budget may present some very challenging problems for the new Council. To this end I have called for a Strategic Planning Session to be held this year. The outcome of the session will be to establish short and long term goals for the City.

In closing, I would like to thank the out going Council as well as City staff for the past accomplishments and the hard work that has kept this city moving forward. To the new Council, I challenge you to keep the city a great place to live, work and play, and to keep our great city moving forward.

Thank-you

Robert Miller  
Mayor